Har 2314.

2 Northwick Park Rd
Harrow
June 8th I think ~~May~~ 1966

Dearest René

Thank you very much for your letter received this A.M. about the 'soupers' and also for an earlier one ~~of~~ about 10 days back about Historica famina etc.

It was wonderful to see Joan again at Douglas's ~~that~~ evening & I was so pleased to see her looking so well. Do give her my love. I'm glad she got back safe & sound.

Yes, greatly enjoyed "it reminds me of the 'soup'". It bloody well does me too!

They used to talk a lot about 'the soupers' when I was in New Barracks ~~Limerick~~ Limerick in the summer of 1918 I think. I told you all about ~~that~~ years ago. How my dear father owing to his protestant connections with chaps in Ireland, sent me, as it were, 'letters of credence' to a chap called Dr Long and also to the Misses Gregg, sisters, or near relatives of, the then Protestant Archbishop of Armagh (I think) so ~~that~~ when I was off duty from ~~that~~ damned barracks I had somewhere to go to tea & have a shower co – a bit like Taplow & his aunt! – well, not really at all, for they were very kind to me & jolly nice, but he seemed worried because I had a mate who was a Catholic & I asked if he could come with me one day to tea – I remember thinking it very odd because they were surrounded by Catholics & as far as I could tell, on quite good terms with them, but they appeared to think that my English Catholic buddy might have horns & a tail almost.

Dr Long was a nice bloke & had a jolly nice house, a bit wh

N.B. Sorry for this indecipherable terribly long letter, but having written it, don't feel I can ~~tear~~ it up. Don't bother about it – it's really only to send you my love. D.

the Shannon fr Limerick if I remember aright.
He was a medical doctor & literally a
'Souper' — well, so I understood. He had a
surgery in Limerick & treated people
~~for~~ with various ills for nothing, but, it was
said, preached to them at the same time.
I know the little urchins in Limerick used
to sing some song, the only line of which I
could ever get ~~was~~ "Dr Long's mother has
a cook-shop in hell" I was also told ~~that~~
one day he hired a jaunting-car to take him
somewhere & the driver took the horse out
of the shafts on some excuse or other &
left him stranded & ~~but~~ he stayed in the
vehicle for hours & preached to the passers-by — but
god knows if any of this was true or not,
~~but~~ I can well believe it, for he had
~~that~~ sort of General Gordon thing about him.

Curious thing, that particular brand of
'muscular Xtianity' which goes with a
certain sort of Protestantism. I could
absolutely see old Dr Long in ~~[illegible]~~ 17th Cent.
Cambridge in very gentlemanly ~~but~~ plain
attire — a future chaplain ~~in~~ Joyce's
'Oloja Crumple's' New Model Army.

The persistance of a certain type ~~that~~
any given religious form produces is
damned interesting I think, and jolly hard
to pin down, but very recognizable.
I suppose it's much the same thing
~~that~~ makes a portrait bust of say a
Roman ~~[illegible]~~ administrative chap or even
an ~~Egt~~ Egyptian business-man of ~~this~~ the
3rd Cent. ~~AD~~ look exactly like modern
~~counterparts~~ English counterparts. That is
most striking in ~~that~~ book of photographs
of Roman Portrait sculpture published about
20 years ago — or more.

Joan told me that the correct
pronunciation of '**ogam**' is that
the **g** ~~is~~ mute. I did not know
that because, of course, English archaeologists
etc. always call them Og-ams — at
least as far as I can recall.
It's interesting how Irish-Celtic
orthography is ~~[illegible]~~ so very

different from Welsh-Celtic orthography in
that whereas in the latter every bloody
letter is sounded, in the former lots of
letters don't appear to be sounded at all.
I've noticed this sometimes when the
two forms are virtually the same word in
the two ~~[illegible]~~ branches of Celtic, &
one recognizes the same word when it
is said but not at all as it is written.
I can't think of an example, but I know
that occasionally, in the past, when someone
who ~~knew~~ knows how to pronounce some
Irish word I've seen the root resemblance
which was quite unrecognizable to me in Irish
script.

Yes, isn't it extraordinary, that
thing about if one hears of something
one day it's found to turn accidently
fr some other quarter pretty soon after.
I'm thinking of your finding the
reference to 'Western Sayings' in
MacNally's book. Yes, it might
well occur in the 8th or 9th Cent.
but it started much earlier.

Your quotation fr MacNally sounds
as though he doesn't approve!
I remember reading somewhere (can
remember nothing properly now) of a writing ~~[illegible]~~
chap, I think quite early*),
about Aldhelm(?) the Saxon monk
at Malmesbury (which was an Irish
foundation) & praising Aldhelm(?)
for not employing the 'barbarous
& affected syntax etc' of the
Hisperic school. The criticism
was almost exactly ('I can find
no main verb' – with which we
are familiar. But I wish I knew
more about it – I know my reference
to it, by Nora K. Chadwick and

* I mean mediaeval.

④

as I think I told you from Tiger Dawson
~~thirty~~ asking me if the Anathemata was influenced
by it & by Sir Eric Maclagan (dona ei
requiem) asking me the same thing about
In Paren.

I see the Irish form of ecclesia
is, from your letter, (May 21) Eaglis
there at least the Irish & Welsh
forms are very similar – eglwys
But the word for 'priest' in Welsh
is never from sacerdos but always
is Offeiriad, ~~from~~ the chap who makes
~~Yr~~ Offeren (from Offerenda) & ~~what~~
is offered is always called yr aberth
'the victim.' — aberth has a short a so
it's pronounced ăb-berrth, well, the second
element sounds more like ~~a~~ bearth, with the
'r' rolled of course. It's odd how in this
linguistic business one ~~form~~ ~~the word~~
term sticks in one branch of any
given language and another term
for roughly the same thing in another, closely akin
language. E.g. Kil- some sort of religious cell
the number of 'Kils' Ireland & the
Goidelic-speaking areas of Scotland must be
very many whereas there are comparatively
few in Wales – more than one might think,
but ~~[illegible]~~ comparatively few — about
20, I suppose, all told & I think
only 3 Bangors, ~~the~~ It would seem
that in Wales the term Llan- superceded
all other terms for a religious enclosure
. In fact in a number of cases of
place-names Llan- has been substituted
in place of Glan- a river-bank or
hillock, and I think (not sure) sometimes
for Glyn- a deep glen. Yet
cil & bangor & llan all indicated
a religious enclosure or site of some
sort. I suppose, as llan is from
a common Celtic word lando
exactly the same meaning as common
Teutonic landa ✗, meaning 'land', though it's
it must have come

I think that's right.
& not the other way round
I mean lando Teutonic
& landa Celtic.

anyway it just means 'land'.
So Llanfair . llan + Mair means, at root, 'Maryland'.

⑤

Irish in some form, not necessarily to do with any religious foundation at all. I don't know why it became, in Wales, to mean land enclosed for some ecclesial site. The ordinary word in Welsh for just 'land' is tir pronounced teerr which comes (I imagine) from some common Aryan word same as Lat. terra, don't know, but sounds like it. My aunt in North Wales when I was a child lived in a house called 'Glas-dir' & I remember her telling me that it meant 'glebe-land' because it was built on land belonging to the parish church. I did not of course then know, (I was about 8 I suppose) that the 'Glas-' element referred ~~was~~ in fact ~~to~~ to ~~[illegible]~~ clas, the ordinary word used in the Celtic organism of the Church for a community of any given founder, e.g. the clas of St Beuno, or the clas of St David & so on. & it comes direct from Lat. classis. The reason for the initial g in place of t is that the qualifying word or ~~word~~ used adjectivaly should come after the word it qualifies, so it would be Tir Clas, but if it is placed before, then it ~~[illegible]~~ is subject to the Soft Mutation, so tir becomes dir. I'm not sure why the initial C becomes G, but there is no doubt a good reason it is of my ignorance. If clas or tir were feminine (which they are not, as old Belloc would have said) I should have supposed it was because the definite article Y had been dropped before clas, for that would make the C a g. That's why 'The Darren' at Capel was called The Darren* & not 'The Tarren'. Tarren is a feminine noun singular* & before the definite article Y, becomes darren, & means a rocky knoll or just a tump. It is conceivable that in the case of my aunt's house it was sheer habitual 'Glas-dir', out of pronunciation — I don't know. I expect it had a sounder reason & that it's just my bloody ignorance. But they do, in s~~peaking~~ Welsh,

made a howler of that one in that dedicatory page in I.P. when I wrote PENTRE, PANDY AND Y TAREN. A good example of a 'little knowledge' being a 'dangerous thing'. I knew at that date that T & not D was the radical form but I did not then know that it was a feminine noun and so ~~[illegible]~~ with the definite article would be Darren. How I missed out the second R I don't know. I also, in that dedication, wrote Y HAFOD instead of YR HAFOD, both these have at last been corrected, but ~~[illegible]~~ TREATH FAWR a mistake for ~~[illegible]~~ TRAETH FAWR has never been corrected — an odd mistake because I certainly knew that & shall traeth — a beach or flat shore of the seas or estuaries, — I suppose it was just an oversight.

* in feminine nouns plural the mutation does not operate. Bloody complex. ~~[illegible]~~ Thus ~~[illegible]~~ mam, mother but 'the mother' is Y fam, but 'the mothers' is Y mamau. or Bryn, hill, Y Fryn, 'the hill', but 'the hills' Y bryniau

sometimes make the written c sound like a g as in ac the word for 'and' before a vowel, (a before a consonant) — but ac is always pronounced ag. but I doubt if that accounts for 'Glas-dir'.

What a marvellous chap that ~~you~~ Offeiriad you mention, this reverence, ~~Dr Loughlan~~ no, Fr Murphy, — those are the sort of chaps who understand, as it were from the inside, the 'Celtic' thing — quiet, obscure men often, who know both ~~the~~ 'Q' & 'P' Celtic & hence often amass a great number of obscure books — you get, or did get, the same type in Wales I was reading of one such only a few months back who had died & whose cottage was packed from floor to ceiling with books — but of course a man such as Fr Murphy with the far wider horizon which Catholicity & acquaintance with Latin alone, brings makes all the difference. It's one reason that makes Saunders L. so different from most other Welshmen (his wife, by the way, is Irish) but his deep love of & familiarity with the poetry & prose of Wales is accompanied by an ability in Latin & French & Italian so that ~~his judgement~~ he has judgement which can bring all sorts of comparisons to bear. But I'm wandering all over the shop as usual.

Is the word that Fr Murphy says means the deer-pass, Connifea? I was not sure & could not find it on a map — have no map of sufficiently large-scale to show it — I mean of the Clonmell district. I was merely wondering if there were any equivalent Welsh words for 'pass' & 'deer' — the only Welsh words I know for 'deer' are hydd & carw (plural is ceirw) plural of hydd is hyddod, these ~~all~~ are all masculine. The feminine, a 'hind', is ewig (pl. ewigod) but there may be other words for these creatures but I don't know about. The Welsh for 'pass' might be all sorts of words.

⑦

But much the most common ~~is~~ bwlch. Culffordd is used, it is a compound of cul 'narrow' and ffordd, 'way' or 'road'. There is also drws, , a gap or narrow pass, but ~~used~~ also meaning 'door' & is the ordinary word for ~~[illegible]~~ door ~~[illegible]~~ or a room, but is also used ~~of~~ ~~the~~ opening to, say, a wood. 'Forestgate', for example, would be Drws-y-coed 'gate of the wood'.

Nevertheless I expect if one knew enough about the roots of Celtic words one would find ~~out~~ Connifea(?) has a corresponding form in Welsh.

The metamorphoses are so camouflaging but one can easily recognise ~~the~~ underlying identities. For example, Gwynedd, that ~~[illegible]~~ great northern division of Wales, Venedotia in Latin, also spelt Gwenedota in some early MSS. is reckoned by the chaps who know about these things, to come from the name of the ~~[illegible]~~ Scotti ~~[illegible]~~ who lived in the middle & eastern part of Ireland*, the Féni. They made settlements in north west Wales, & there is ample evidence* of this. Cunedda from south-east Scotland established himself in Gwynedd & either drove out or subdued these Féni,* while yet their name stuck. & While one would not recognise it in the ~~[illegible]~~ very Welsh-sounding Gwynedd it, is at least fairly recognizable in 'Venedotia', isn't it, ain't it, or is it not? Same with South-West Wales, all that area now Pembrokeshire,

* Leinster in fact.

* ~~ogam~~ Ogam stones for one thing.

* The word is said, to indicate ~~[illegible]~~ a number of 'tribes', a mixture of peoples rather than one distinct group.

a lot of Carmarthenshire etc. was called Dyfed, or ~~[illegible]~~
Demet~~ia~~ & that name came from
colonization by chaps from where you live
called the Dési ~~and~~ ~~that~~ those settlements
were far more extensive & permanent than
the settlements of the Féni in Gwynedd.
~~[illegible]~~ they became absorbed into the
Brittonic Celtic population & Welsh became
their language - but they founded (or fused
with) ~~the~~ ruling dynasties & as far east as
Breconshire the names of ~~sub-reguli~~ some sub-reguli
are obviously Irish and ~~the nam~~ other names,
e.g. Illtud ~~[illegible]~~ shows Irish influence, for
the Welsh form would be Elltud. and in a
church dedicated to Illtud up the the North,
I think in Meirionydd (not sure)X it is
spelt Llan Elltud. And ~~it is~~ there are all
sorts of other indications, ogam~~s~~ stones
again, you'll remember ~~there~~ is one on Caldey.
indeed the archaeologists, ~~th~~ palaeographic
experts & co. ~~[illegible]~~ were first able to decipher the
ogams because on these Ogham stones in
S. Wales there is a Latin inscription as
well and as far as I can recollect it
occurred to some bloke to wonder if
some such ordinary words as Hic iacit
rex etc. corresponded with the cut
groups of strokes or ~~the~~ ogams on
the same stone, and they found ~~that~~
this appeared to be the case & after a
bit were able to decipher the whole
ogam alphabet which apparently
is based on the Latin alphabet.
I don't know upon what principle,
but one can see that one or two
lateral ~~[illegible]~~ incisions might stand for
A & others for B & so on.
I think they have it all taped now,
but I know that the ~~[illegible]~~ most
recent findings on the matter
differ from those given in books
say twenty or thirty years back. I expect
Fr Murphy would know all about this.

X or might be
northern
Ceredigion
or even
Caernarfon -
anyway in the
North where
Irish forms
were virtually
~~[illegible]~~
eliminated.

⑨

To an ordinary bloke, such as myself, merely interested in such matters it seem odd that if the inscribers of the ogams knew the Latin alphabet why they chose to invent these groups of strokes as a substitute for it — I'm sure there is a perfectly good reason for this, but I don't know what it is, but I do know — at least when I say 'know', that's what the chaps say — that it derives from the Latin alphabet. Perhaps a further example of, the 'Celtic' love of 'abstraction'* — don't know. I wonder if those Nordic runic characters are also to be traced to Greek & Roman sources. I wouldn't be at all surprized, for more & more things turn out to be traceable ultimately to influences from the Middle Sea, by however devious a fashion. Only last year I was told something about Scandinavian ships, I can't remember what it was, confess it, — but it concerns something borrowed from Roman ships, whereas we have always thought of those chaps as preeminently ingenious masters of ship-building & tackle & seamanship & so of course they indeed became — but I wish I could remember what this thing was that very early they borrowed from a Mediterranean source — wish I'd made a note of it, for it was of especial interest. It is after all, only to be expected, for that Middle-Sea civilization did stand in 'technics' especially to the outer world very like England in the last cent. or America in this for something to be copied or adapted in innumerable ways.

I can never think of Scandinavia without thinking of old Joyce's Ballade of Persse O'Reilly

'then ~~[illegible]~~ we'll have a free trade Gael's band
and mass meeting
For to sod the brave son of Scandiknavery
And we'll bury him down in Oxmanstown
Along with the devil and Danes,
With the deaf & dumb Danes,
And all their remains.'

Heavens, that is a bloody amusing poem. I think the verse that amuses

*No, I remember now how in that book Celtic Heritage of Alwyn & Brinley Rees, 1961, that I wrote a thing about in some paper, the Spectator – New English Weekly – can't remember – but a thing in it about ogams; I don't think they mentioned the derivation from Roman alphabet at all, but did mention how it (ogam) was used in some 'secret' or arcane sense & in connection with numbers used 'mystically' – a thing about when ogam and achau (?) meet all things will dissolve or become one thing. – can't remember – wonder what achau means?

me most, is one which ends with the lines
'Begot, he's crux of the catalogue
Of our antediluvial zoo,
(chorus) Messrs. Billing & Coo
Noah's Arks, good as noo.'

Yes. I do indeed think that thing you wrote in the magazine Twentieth Century, in 1960 (how the years turn away) is the best by far of any all round account of my efforts. Harman re-read it a little back and was saying how extremely well you'd managed it.

I can well believe what you say of Bernardine W. asking what I write 'about'. Very few chaps read the stuff, & I don't really think that whatever anyone says about ~~the~~ it, will ~~[illegible]~~ cause other than a very few ever to get the hang of it. As you say, I.P. could scarcely have had a 'better press' ~~[illegible]~~ — but even I.P. is still regarded as 'strange', 'curious' 'peculiar', 'difficult' and as for The Ana., well, it certainly has its decided enthusiasts, ~~here~~ & in the States, but only among a very limited number of readers. I don't mind, and I think I see why, but sometimes it puzzles me that certain sorts of blokes who I thought would comprehend its intention, just cannot make head or tail of it. Then again ~~quite~~ there are quite surprising exceptions.

I don't know if I mention this in my last letter, by a chap called David Blamires, a young man, lecturer in German language & literature at Manchester Univ. has written a most clear, ~~&~~ concise & understanding thing about The Ana. in a periodical called A Review of Eng. Lit. in the April 1966 issue. The editor is A. Norman Jeffares & he's professor of Eng. Lit. at Leeds Univ. & the magazine is published by Longmans.

He wrote to me the other day wondering if he could come & see me when he was in London & I wrote to him saying I should be delighted & said how good I thought his thing on The Ana. was. Now, he's of the Society of Friends, a Quaker, but he

absolutely 'gets' the whole historic Catholic thing.
He did for his thesis at Cambridge a study
of Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival so I
suppose one lead in for him would be
through the Arthurian Romance cycles — but
by no means only that. He quotes in his article
on the Ana — a thing from St Irenaeus, a chap
I've always liked from the tiny bits read in
various things, but he, Blamires gives a
superb Irenaean quote that I'd never before
seen: Nihil vacuum neque sine signo
apud Deum. Bloody good, isn't it & he
ends his article with an absolute stunner
from a bit of one of those sayings
attributed to our Lord among that considerable
heap of papyri they found about the
year when I was born, I think — 1895 or 96,
at the place about 200 miles from Cairo
down the Nile, called now El Bahnasa
but in Antiquity, Oxyrhynchus, it
was the centre of the province of
Arcadia in Romano-Hellenistic Egypt.
a big Egyptian monastery was there
& thence the big find ~~[illegible]~~ of early
Xtian papyri. I had only heard
of the finds there from various sources.
I think they made quite a stir when
first found, rather like those "Dead Sea
Scrolls" in our time, anyway the bit
Blamires quotes is: 'Lift up the
stone & there thou shalt find me:
cleave the wood & I am there.'
says just about all there is to say, don't
you think?
A day or so
~~[illegible]~~ Sunday, June 12th I think. I was looking up the Oxyrhynchus
back ~~[illegible]~~ in the Encyclopaedia Britannica &
papyri ~~[illegible]~~ found ~~[illegible]~~ the article
about these finds (article written in I suppose 1910) &
it chanced to give the ~~Greek [illegible]~~
which I'll try to write out for you in

Greek and you can tell me if you kindly
would sometime ~~[illegible]~~ what you think
of the translation. I do wish I could
read Greek.

[illegible] Later. Damnation. I've been looking at
the Encycl. Britt. again & find it does not
give the Greek. it gives the date of the
find in ~~[illegible]~~ 1896 at Behnasa as I
said but no account of the text — was
where did I read the blasted thing? — for
I knew for certain that a few days back
I found the Greek text — but where?
Do you ever do that sort of thing? I
mean find something & think it is in one
book & find ~~[illegible]~~ later that it must
have been elsewhere. I know I read it, it
was not an illusion, but it is not in this Encyclopaedia Brit.
as I had supposed — so I can't give you
the Greek original, ~~after~~ all. It's the sort
of thing that makes one wonder what's wrong
with one's ridiculous type of mind.

Yes, I fear you are ~~[illegible]~~ right
about our thing — I mean the Western
Liturgy & a great deal besides ~~[illegible]~~
by which one's whole being has been formed.
It has next to nothing to do with ~~[illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ individual "knowing"
this or that
the Latin tongue — I'm absolutely
bewildered by the attitude of
of the Bishops & Co toward the
whole of this business. I simply
cannot believe that it was the intention
of the Apostolic See, in ~~giving~~ granting
permissive use of vernaculars to wreck
the liturgical heritage of ~~[illegible]~~ the Western
Patriarchate. Indeed the document
~~[illegible] I believe~~ dealing with the
Constitution of the Liturgy together with
other announcements, makes it quite plain
that the Latin of the Liturgy remains

that of the Church & even has a clause
saying that steps should be taken to ensure
that the faithful ~~[illegible]~~ are able to say or
sing in Latin the parts of the Ordinary of
Mass which belong to them. The use of
the vernacular in parts of the Mass is
always referred to as permissive & never
compulsory. & as applying to some part of
world in varying degrees at the discretion
of the heirarchies of the differing areas,
subject to the approbation of the Holy See.
Well, I suppose that every man jack
of the bishops of this island has decided
~~that~~ to take full advantage of this
permissive use & flog well impose it.
I find it exceedingly hard to believe that
they all are of one mind in the matter,
but however that may be they have all
imposed roughly the same vernacularization:
There's something very odd indeed about it all.
something which I can't follow. I mean quite
apart from my personal ~~[illegible]~~ feelings
that its produced a ghastly mess, ~~[illegible]~~
and my opinion that even as a
~~pastoral~~ tactic ~~[illegible]~~ employed with a
genuine 'pastoral care' for 'modern man'
it is a ~~[illegible]~~ mistaken tactic,
even aside from all that, I find it
terribly hard to believe that all
these blokes, 'Bischopes & Bachelers
Bothe maistres and doctours. That
han cure under Criste and crounyng
in tokne', who appear to be
falling over each other in implementing
these permissive measures, can
possibly have suddenly become of
one mind. It is so damned difficult
to express one's feelings over the matter.
I've heard of a chap in the north of
England who asked that a Requiem Mass
should be said or sung in Latin for
his old father who had just died, &
the priest said he would have to
consult the bishop. but he need
not ~~[illegible]~~ either [illegible] of it being granted
& that the chap had better either
have the Requiem said in English or
or it might not be said at all. Which seems to
me insufferable [illegible] over me [illegible]
at it.

Wednesday June 15th. this letter is getting a terrible length and I'm afraid you'll find it a tedious bore also, but somehow in writing to yr old mate you can meander on like a type of conversation which is a relief after all these bloody letters I have to write to all & sundries answering some damned question ~~[illegible]~~ about some work or other that I dont know how to answer. My eyes have been troubling me a lot of late. but over the years since I've had this nerve-trouble or whatever the sod is I've noticed they (the eyes) get rather bad & then get better again for no apparent reason, however I went to the oculist the other day & he said that as far as he could make out, [& he made all sorts of weird tests with various coloured lights & diagrams of horizontal & vertical lines & rayed lines & co. — this modern tecnical and gadget (can't spell it) proliferation aint ½ forging ahead] there was nothing wrong with the actual sight whatever but that ~~the~~ ~~though~~ some new glasses were needed, so we'll see what they do when they are ready.

About Vernon S., yes, I ~~ed~~ too liked him very much as a chap. He came with his secretary — I thought she was his wife, but Joan Told me she was his secretary, I thought she was jolly nice — they came because he wrote ~~asking [illegible]~~ saying he wished to ask me certain questions about Eric, & also asked if I would be prepared to go to the television studios to take part in the programme. Well, I didn't feel I could do the latter, but ~~that~~ certainly I would ~~try~~ to answer any questions he wished to ask me. But I'm afraid nothing that I could say was of much use to him. Douglas C. had kindly given him all the recorded material for that previous sound broadcast about E.G. made some few years back, & I dont think I could add much more to that. Awful business really these impromptu questions, 'interviews' etc. When you consider how bloody difficult it is to say

anything remotely accurate in writing a considered
article or something, it becomes ludicrously
crude & sometimes positing the opposite of
what one intends when asked point-blank
some direct question — a 'question' that
~~that~~ is impatient of an 'answer' without
going into endless stuff & making presuppositions
of all sorts. The only ~~times~~ occasions when
impromptu 'recordings' seem to be any good
~~are~~ when the questioner & the questioned
have a rather special, common ~~view~~
— a 'shared background' of some sort.
For example when, about 18 months or more
ago, the television chaps came here &
part of the feature was a conversation
between Saunders Lewis & myself, he
being the questioner, we talked for nearly
two hours & I completely forgot the
presence of about six or more chaps in
the room with lights, & cameras, ~~mic~~
microphones, etc. I suppose because of
the complete understanding between
Saunders & myself — it became just
a pretty natural conversation, we
meandered about all over the shop,
& I was astonished that we had been
talking for nearly, as I say, 2 hrs.
They used only 20 minutes of this
conversation, but I must say, to be
fair, managed to cut it so that
the salient arguments or theme came
across very well — it was very skilfully
managed. But all the remainder of
the day's recordings were cut out.
Well, obviously, if a programme is only
going to be of 20 mins. duration
you can't have stuff that took from
10 A.M to 7 P.M. all told!

But to return to Vernon S. as I
say I liked him very much as a
chap, but I don't think I was
able to get very far as to my
views (for what they are worth). I said

I had tried to elucidate them in various bits of
articles, such as Art & Sacrament (reprinted
in Epoch & Artist) ~~[illegible]~~ others for example a
broadcast called Use and Sign & printed in
The Listener in ~~[illegible]~~ 1962, May 24th issue.
He said he would ~~[illegible]~~ get Epoch & Artist
but he's a very busy chap & I don't suppose
he'd have time to go into that stuff & even
if he did I doubt whether my real dilemma
would come across. For I find that even chaps
who are very sympathetic to & familiar with my
various attempts to state the situation as I see
it, or at least 'Ask the Question' as to 'why is
the land ~~[illegible]~~ waste?' don't, except for a very, very
few, Harman, yourself, and out of the blue, sometimes
~~[illegible]~~ e.g. Harold Rosenberg who wrote that
unexpected chaps long critique of Epoch & Artist in the
~~[illegible]~~ New Yorker for August 22, 1964. really
drive up to the reality of the dilemma.
I tried Vernon S. but I was no good
at impromptu conversation on the matter &
found it tortuous difficult to put it in
considered form in writing. But he said
something to the effect that what I had
said in my long conversation with him indicated
that I had an absolutely 'medieval mind.'
I tried to say that it was not basically
anything to do with the Middle-Ages, but
to do with presuppositions as to what
appeared to be the nature of man.
You see, knowledge of theology, great
& deep understanding of the Xtian
tradition in any of its aspects, ~~[illegible]~~ or
of other religious beliefs & cults as
well, nor spirituality, nor a profound
understanding of psychology or of phenomena
of all sorts, seems ~~[illegible]~~ not ~~to~~ be of much
help in making chaps see the particular
dilemma touching this business of
effectual signa. For the question
is anterior to all the varied
beliefs & practices & behaviour of
human beings & (maybe) of some
other 'animals' ~~&~~ also if we knew
enough about them, but for the time
being, anyhow, we'd best confine the
question to human beings; for one

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~~thing~~ the evidence of 'ritual', i.e. non-utile practices among certain creatures is a study of various specialists in ~~animal~~ non-human animal behaviour and is in its infancy & few conclusions can yet be drawn. But with regard to homo sapiens, well, not only do we know about him because we are him but we have at least 60,000 years and may be a hell of a lot longer, of evidence of this ere signa-making in man.

None the less it is extraordinarily difficult to get chaps to see what one is really talking about when one says that, e.g. the Sacraments of the Church are a 'total impossibility', ~~whilst~~ unacceptable unless man is essentially a creature of sign & signa-making, a 'sacramentalist' to the core.

It is so hard to make it clear that one is not talking about 'ritual' in the sense of degrees of ritual. Here Catholic 'apologists', especially now, confuse the issue just as much as other chaps, in that they tend, in various ways, or give the impression – I don't know how to put this — that ~~that the~~ sacraments are in some way helps to our 'infirm' condition rather than absolutely central and inevitable and inescapable to us as creatures with bodies, whose nature it is to do this, or that, rather than think it. I believe the essence of protestantism is that the Xtian religion is a matter of an inclination of the heart & soul of an interior disposition, resulting in virtuous works of all sorts, — all most admirable & unquestionably that's all contained in the Catholic tradition also, but with the crucial difference that certain manual cult-actions & verbal formulae are of the essence of ~~the~~ Xtian religion, not primarily because such actions are 'commanded' (or appear to be commanded) in the Gospels & were the practice of the 'Early Church', but because such is the nature of man.

But is this diagnosis is any where near

true it is pretty easy to see that kinds of
Protestantism are more acceptable to the main
trend of our phase of civilisation than is
the Catholic insistance on the crucial position
of Sacrament, of signa. It is perfectly true
that all kinds of non-Catholic Xtian bodies,
(the Methodists being for ~~example~~ one example among
many) ~~have~~ are tending to a return to a
'liturgy' & the Eucharist is taking a much
more prominent position among them than it
did only a few decades back, and again in
the C. of E. ~~is~~ the change in, I suppose,
the majority ~~[illegible]~~ of churches is so great
that my parents, let ~~along~~ alone my
grandparents, would ~~not~~ have conceived possible.
But I don't think any of this, at bottom,
affects the situation, any more than I
think the enormous 'interest' in the visual
arts, the radio discussions & talks on the
Great Masters, whether it be Giotto or Tintoretto,
~~[illegible]~~ or Goya or Turner alters
~~[illegible]~~ the situation — which doesn't
~~[illegible]~~ I'm not pleased that such
mean that
interests are shown.

Damnation, more meandering.

What I am really trying to say is that the turn
that our civilization has ~~taken~~, the 'positivist',
~~affects~~ the Catholic thing
~~[illegible]~~ Hegelian turn ~~[illegible]~~
in a special way
I suppose one can trace it, in embryonic form, to late
Nominalism — something I read in Meister Eckhart
the other day made me think. It was about
that text where the women
Our Lady,
in the crowd says "Blessed is the womb that
bear thee, etc." & our Lord said "Nay rather,
blessed are they that hear the word of God &
keep it." It's used as the Gospel in the
Common of Our Lady. Ælred of Rievaulx
in the 12th Cent. I remember said in a sermon
that the Fiat of Mary was primary to
her physically bearing the Incarnate Word &
that everything depended upon her Fiat mihi.
Now, that is perfect. But when we come
to Eckhart, the difference is subtle, but jolly
important. He says: ~~It is [illegible] of~~

Thursday 16th
~~Ex~~

'It is more worthy of God that he should
be born spiritually in every virgin or good
soul than that he was born physically of
Mary' sounds alright, but the next step
is to 'demythologize' the story of the
historic physical Incarnation and say
that what matters is that all chaps
should be awfully good, which is, roughly
speaking, more ~~or~~ less, what the present
~~[illegible]~~ notion of the aims of Xtianity
boils down to. And that ~~does~~ is not in
difficulty in our civilizational phase in
at all the same way as a religion of
sacrament is.

Older Protestants ~~[illegible]~~ from the Reformers
of the 16th Cent to the last century did,
generally speaking, take over a great
deal of the Church's structure, observances,
etc intact — the Canon of Scripture taken
very literally, hence the Incarnation was
as of much ~~[illegible]~~ importance to them
as it was to the Catholic religion. They
rejected the Mass on various grounds
but retained the commemorative rite
of Holy Communion. Without questioning
this ~~sincer~~ sincerity — and just considering
the matter in itself, the penetration of
the timeless into time at some long
past historic date is more easy
than accepting an analogous event
in the historic-present — I mean in
the words of that 14th Cent. carol
'The flour sprong in heye Bedlem
That is bothe bryght & schen'
is ~~ea~~ 'more easy' of acceptance, because
more remote in time apart from being
in the written Scriptures than is
a later verse in that carol or poem
'The thredde braunche is good & swete
It sprong in hevene crop & rote
Therein to dwellyn & ben our bote
Every day in schewit in prystes
(hond.'
Yet the 'difficulties' of giving credence

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to the ~~[illegible]~~ birth in the reign of Caesar Augustus
(itself no less a signum and what is signified)
than the 'difficulties' of giving credence to
that sign which is also what is signified
shown 'every day' in 'priest's hand'.

But leaving aside the truth or otherwise
of the Catholic belief in this matter, it
is clearly at odds with the thought-process
which condition all men of our essentially
~~positivist~~ positivist, de-sacramentalized
civilization, whereas a religion of the
mind, of aspirations of interior 'faith'
issuing in 'good-works' is not, fundamentally,
at odds with 'modern man'. It is for
this reason that I think it useless for
those who hold to the Catholic belief to,
I don't know, gloss over or something, this
~~[illegible]~~
business.*

I was pretty annoyed when, ten years
ago now, I think, ~~[illegible]~~ our
liturgical experts deleted from the Mass
of Corpus Xti the Preface ~~for~~ Xmas —
it seemed so perfect a choice in
everyway, aesthetically & theologically — I
understand St Thomas was mainly responsible
for the proper of the Mass of Corpus Xti
we dont know, but he,
& I imagine, chose the Xmas Preface to go with it.
Anyway it had an instinctual rightness.
These blasted liturgists has a positive
genius for knocking out poiesis.

Must stop, dearest René, forgive
this appalling long & entirely useless
letter. I've not read it ~~[illegible]~~ through. So
God knows what rubbish it contains.
well. Love to you all.

yours ever Dai.

* It's difficult
to put into words
& I'm getting less
& less able to
put anything into
words — but
even apart from
this business of
valid signa.
There is a
pervasive feeling
at parish level
of something like
'it's all perfectly
straightforward &
understandable, etc.'
A priest at a
church that a friend of
mine goes to said for
example only last
Sunday: "we must
get rid of all this
accumulated stuff — Latin
& all that obscures".

Tell me sometime about this difference
between the two parties in Éire — Dev &
the other chap. Forgotten what the terms
are now but something like 'Fianna Fail' (?) &
something else. what do the words mean?